



# Who Are Better Teammates: Men or Women?

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I love it when our conventional wisdom is challenged, when the stereotypes are exploded, or at least questioned. When asked, most of us might respond to this question with, "Well, since there we see more boys and men participating in team sports (football, basketball, etc.) than girls and women, it must be because men are more comfortable and enjoy the team experience more than women." Right? Wrong!

According to Peter Kuhn and Marie Claire Villeval, of the Institute for the Study of Labor, women like working on teams more than men do, and the primary reason is that most men overestimate their own individual abilities. In a study conducted by Kuhn and Villeval, 174 people (male and female) were asked to translate numbers into letters using a code they were all given—a relatively routine task when participants were provided with the code. Participants were compensated monetarily for each correct translation, whether they worked individually or with a chosen teammate. 41% of the women chose to work with a partner, while only 11% of the men worked with a partner.

While the best performers for both genders performed as individuals, post-experiment questionnaires revealed that the men believed that working with a partner would decrease their effectiveness, though there was no evidence to support that belief. When the researchers increased the amount of compensation if participants joined a team to complete the task, the gender gap differences virtually disappeared with 75% of participants choosing to work on a team for the task.